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JAPANESE EXPATRIATE WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

Ayano Sonoda

September 2013

JAPANESE EXPATRIATE WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

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JAPANESE EXPATRIATE WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

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Expatriation from Japanese companies has been considered mainly for men. This research focuses on gradually increasing Japanese expatriate women's experiences in the United States. Using structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), gender practices and (re)production of gendered structure at Japanese organizations in the United States are illustrated. It is exploratory research without prior research focusing on the subjects. Literature review, therefore, covers three relevant areas: women in workplace in Japan, Japanese expatriates in the United States, and women in international assignments from western countries.

This research employs qualitative research method to understand the social world of Japanese expatriate women in the United States. Twenty participants are gathered through convenience and snowballing sample techniques.

Findings are in two areas: private and organizational spheres. Gender plays a significant role in both areas. Organizations are officially gender free, but it is time to face that women are disadvantaged because of their gender. Particularly, most of participants reproduce gendered practice that expatriation is for men or women who can work like men. Therefore, an expatriate woman with a child and another with trailing husband in the United States face challenges. Japanese companies should acknowledge that organizational system do not reflect women's perspectives at expatriatism. Japanese

expatriate women should also take an active role in networking and mentoring for greater participation of women in international assignments in the future.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The environment for working women has changed greatly in the past twenty years in Japan, but disadvantages for women in the workplace still remain. Women in management have been attracting increasing attentions (Sandburg, 2013), and women in international assignments are another frontier for the 21st century global economy. Research concerning business expatriates individuals who move either temporarily or permanently to another country as part of their employment has almost entirely focused on men and their families' experiences (Linowes, Tsurumi, & Nakamura, 1993, Kurotani, 2005). The research on international assignees from Western countries focused on male professionals in the early stages of multi-national business until N. J. Adler (1984a) brought women into the discussion. Japan has been behind in promoting gender equality in the workplace (Taylor & Napier, 2002) and assigning women abroad (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999). The life worlds of Japanese women at international assignments deserve attention to better understand the gendered practices in expatriatism.

The number of Japanese expatriate women in America is increasing. In recent years, the number of Japanese women who stayed in America with working visas in the private sector was 5,139 (9% of the category) in 2006, and the figure for women increased to 6,611 (13%) in 2011 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2012). The number of Japanese women who stayed in America with student, researcher, or instructor visas at educational organizations was 36,238 55% of the category. Thus, gender balance of Japanese at private workplaces is disproportionate compared to that at educational

institutions. It is a clear sign that Japanese women are particularly underrepresented at international assignments.

Expatriate women live and work in two social worlds. The first is the highly male expatriate communities from the same country. The other is the hostcountry community. Both affect women's workplace experiences. When women are assigned to less gender equal countries, their male co-workers in the host country do not classify a foreign woman into the same category of local female co-workers, and expatriate women can build a unique social category in the minds of locals (Grove and Hallowell, 1997). Also, when expatriate women report great difficulties, it tends to be about expatriates from the same country (Altman & Shortland, 2008). Therefore, challenges for women are mostly related to home country stereotypes about women in international assignments and gendered practices in organizations (Hartl, 2003).

The purpose of this study is to explore the life world of Japanese expatriate women in the United States. Through interviews with current and past female business expatriates who work(ed) in the United States, this research will shed light on their real life experiences and gender specific challenges at international assignments. Interviewees will be gathered through convenience and snowballing sampling due to the limited access to subjects. Findings will be beneficial to better understand challenges for expatriate women and promote successful international assignments for women in the future.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Being an expatriate originally means to lose one's citizenship in exile (Green, 2009). However, in the business field, expatriatism refers to the practice of overseas assignment of professionals in multinational firms. Although the definition can be as broad as "anyone who is living outside of his or her home country, either permanent or temporary basis (Hess & Linderman, 2007, xxiii)," Napier and Taylor's definition is more specific; they define expatriates as "transferees sent by their companies to international spots (2002, p. 838)." They also define independents as those who "move to a country... in search of a career or career change, and seek work once on the ground," and trailers as those who "follow a spouse or partner abroad." The word expatriate used in this research means international transferees for business purposes from parent companies to subsidiary or joint venture companies across borders.

No single theory explains the complex phenomena of female international business assignments; there are at least nineteen relevant theoretical perspectives regarding gender diversity among expatriates (Shortland, 2009). This research uses the frameworks of "structuration theory" (Giddens, 1984) and "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) to look at how the male dominated expatriate world is (re)constructed with the emergence of female members, and how gender impacts Japanese females in international assignments.

Structuration Theory

Structuration theory is a modern sociological theory, which illustrates the duality of agency and structure. Agency refers to individual human action as well as the actions

of collectives of individuals. Giddens gives great importance to individual agency, especially on what one does rather than what one says. What is said does not necessarily correspond with one's action and often has unintended consequences. Still, what is done has the power to make a difference.

Structure, on the other hand, exists in and through social practices of human beings. Structure is the outcome of previous agency and works to constrain and channel future action. It enables and constructs the everyday conduct in which the actors engage. Structure refers to large scale social structures, and it can also refer to smaller scale structures such as those involved in human interaction. Structure influences both internal and external conditions of an individual life. Structuration bridges the division between individual agency and structure.

Agency and structure are inseparable from each other. According to Giddens, the duality of structure is the central to the structuration theory:

The constitution of agents and structure are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise (Giddens, 1984, p. 25).

Giddens argues “the moment of the production of action is also one of reproduction in the contexts of day-to-day enactment of social life” (Giddens, 1984, p.26). Giddens argues that a central characteristic of modernity is its reflexivity. Reflexivity is also a major feature of structuration theory: “social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about the very practices, thus continuously altering their character” (Ritzer, 2011, p. 553). Today, everything is subject to reflexivity: not

only actions but also structure. Through reflexivity, modern society constantly reforms its structure.

In terms of structure, sociologists often refer to large-scale social structures; however, structure is not limited to the macro-level. Structure can refer to micro-level one of “those involved in human action” (Ritzer, 2011, p. 521). In this research, agency is individual Japanese expatriate women, and structure is the social world around them, which includes individuals from parent companies in Japan, fellow expatriate men and women, and American and other staff at the location. According to the theory, expatriate society forms both the external and internal conditions surrounding these expatriate women, yet these women can, through their actions and interactions, transform the social worlds they interact with. The systems in expatriate society have been traditionally defined by transnational male Japanese norms. This research will see how the social structures shape internal and external conditions of expatriate women and how the practices of expatriate women change or reinforce the systems.

Feuvre pointed out gender and professions are socially constructed entities that have reflexivity (1999). According to him, there are four patterns of reflexivity by female professionals on traditionally male occupations. The first is degradation of the occupational prestige and earning. The second is partial transformation of masculine occupational values by incorporating female values. The third is reinforcement of male occupational values by females following occupational masculinity. The fourth is transformation of gender values by achieving higher gender equality to the point that gender is no longer a central issue. Japanese expatriates might not neatly fit into one of the four types, but this is a valuable guideline.

Doing Gender

West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not what we are or what we have; it is what we do. Gender is something that everyone does routinely and recurrently; it is produced through interaction and achieved in day-to-day social practices. While it is individuals who do gender, gender is situated doing in time, space, and relations in the virtual or real presence of others. It should also be noted that gender is both a medium and outcome of social practices, so doing gender is theoretically compatible with structuration theory.

The starting point of West and Zimmerman's argument are the distinctions between sex, sex category, and gender. In the simplest terms, one is born with a biological sex, assigned to a traditional sex category according to social norms of sex, and learns to do gender over time to be accountable for one's sex category. When individuals do gender according to their normative sex category, they maintain and reproduce institutional arrangement of the sex category. Institutional arrangements of femininity or masculinity are legitimized through the process. When individuals fail to do gender appropriately, they are at the risk of gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Therefore, gender is an "institutional force" to validate and be validated in interaction (Hartl, 2003, p. 43).

Gender is embedded in not only in the domestic domain of family but also in the public organizational domains in less apparent ways. Those who take male-dominated occupations could do their gender jobs in masculine or unfeminine ways in the workplace, for instance. A recent study of women who enter traditionally male jobs illustrates they are accountable for their own gender and professionally required

maleness. When women take jobs assumed for men, they produce gender within jobs (Deutsch, 2007). Moreover, even genderless or gender free workplaces are not free from gendered doing because not doing gender is a way of doing gender (Kelan, 2010). Gender is inevitably present at any organizations whether they are considered highly gendered or gender neutral.

As mentioned above, gender is “situated conduct, in the light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.125) and doing gender means a set of social practices, which define the relationship between men and women (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001). In this line, Japanese expatriates women are expected to display their gender to be accountable for the normative expectations on women in organizations. Expectations on them could be different according to segments of people around expatriates because Japanese have more conservative gender norms. Gendered expectations from Americans and Japanese would be different, and potential magnitude of challenges and barriers caused by each group would also be different.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

As there is no existing research directed toward Japanese expatriate women in the United States, this section will look at 1) women in the workplace in Japan, 2) Japanese expatriates in the United States, and 3) Women at international assignments. All these will contribute to the understanding of Japanese expatriate women in the United States.

Women in the Workplace in Japan

The past two decades displayed some changes in gender relations in Japan (Saito, 2007; Huen, 2007). However, there has been no drastic change in social norms regarding gender, and male-centered norms continue to shape Japanese social practices (Lee & Fujita, 2010; Steel & Kabashima, 2008; Luethge & Byosiene, 2007). Reviewing Japanese women in the workplace shows how women have received disproportionate challenges in the workplace. Japanese companies, particularly large multinational ones, often have strong traditional and conservative gender norms (Chiavacci, 2005). Some career-track women manage to thrive in the male-dominated work environments in Japan, and they are pioneers in receiving international assignments (Kurotani, 2005; Yamada, 2004). International assignments are one of the areas that women are underrepresented including women in management, and the Japanese social structure is the root cause of the problems.

The early milestone regarding gender equality in Japan is the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, which was passed in 1985 (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 1986). It provides recommendations and guidelines about workplace sex-based discrimination on recruitment, assignments, and promotions for the first time; however, it

failed to have adequate mandate power until 1997; the law depended on companies' good will in these areas, and punishments for failures were not strict enough (Nemoto, 2012). Although the law was not perfect, it at least sent out a message about moving toward a gender equal society; but male-centered norms continue to be persistent in people's attitudes and perceptions in reality (Gender Equality Bureau of Cabinet Office, 2010). It is said that the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was imposed before Japan was ready (Parkinson, 1989). As often happens with Japanese policy decisions, pressures from overseas played an important role in the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Kelsky, 1996). The passive nature of gender relations in Japan remains. Yet, recent demographic changes, which will be discussed later, have forced Japan to reconsider its male centered work norms (Husen, 2007).

An ample amount of research exists to show the slow progress of gender equality in Japan. There is a global trend that advanced industrial societies highly support gender equality, industrial societies show medium support, and agricultural societies show small support; however, Japan is an outlier of this trend (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Japan had less progressive views of gender compared with other advanced industrial nations (Chiavacci, 2005). According to the United Nation's gender empowerment measure, Japan ranked 57th out of 109 countries in 2009 (UN Development Program, 2009). However, research between the early 1980s and the 1990s showed that Japan, as well as other countries, became less likely to approve of the husbands as breadwinners and the wives as homemakers model (Treas & Widmer, 2000; Hakim, 2004). The Japanese attitude toward the male breadwinner role is decreasing, yet remains dominant (Gender

Equality Bureau of Cabinet Office, 2010). Though progress is being made, 74% still believe that women are disadvantaged in the workplace (Fuse & Hanada, 2009).

The 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Law caused a major change in the recruitment process. Companies are no longer allowed to recruit new employees based on sex; therefore, they adapt to a so-called dual-track system (Parkinson, 1989). It divides employment opportunities into career and non-career tracks. Career-track workers are core employees with training and promotion opportunities. Non-career track workers are mainly clerical staff, who perform simple tasks such as photocopying and serving tea (Husen, 2007). In theory, career-track jobs are open to both men and women, but most career-track jobs go to men. Women take only 12 percent of career-track job at large firms (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2005). Clearly, there is a gender division in terms of employment opportunity. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law altered overt male domination of the work force to a more covert domination with dual-track system, and gender segregation persists. Although more Japanese women receive higher education, their opportunities are limited (Yu, 2010).

The social construction of gender segregation at the workplace is linked to patriarchal social norms (Fujimoto, 2004). Sugihara and Katsurada (2002) pointed out that the cultural influences of patriarchy and Confucianism, which assumes men's dominance over women, were strengthened in the feudal era and lead to the division of labor in modern Japan. Japanese women are expected to leave the labor force after marrying or having children. There is a normative expectation on women to prioritize family over work and be always available for children especially when they are young (Chiavacci, 2005). Chiavacci found that highly educated women who work at foreign

affiliated companies in Japan consider that women at large Japanese firms are under pressure to quit their jobs during certain period of their life even if they are in career-track jobs.

Labor participation of Japanese women is described as an M shape; there are many young women workers, but they withdraw from the labor market to have children and come back later years mostly as part-timers (Gender Equality Bureau of Cabinet Office, 2012)). Overall, 62% of women who had worked before having their first child resigned before childbirth. The normative pressure on women to leave their jobs and take care of their family was not the only obstacle for women who want to have both work and family; long working hours makes it too difficult to balance work and family (Nemoto, 2012); their husbands' participation in housework is limited; and affordable and convenient day care is not available (Raymo & Lim, 2011). In recent years, the Japanese government has encouraged work-life balance and male participation in child rearing (Gender Equality Bureau of Cabinet Office, 2009), but Japanese society continues to be shaped through traditional male-centered norms, and it fails to reflect working women's needs.

The M shape has become less acute recently; however, it is not because women are better able to balance work and life now. It is because women are postponing marriage and having children later in life or not at all; the average female marriage age was 29.0 and the birth rate was only 1.39 in 2011 (Statistics Bureau, 2013). Raymo and Lim (2011) found that highly educated women are more likely to continue to work throughout their lives, and delays in marriage and childbearing are prominent among

them. Family demographics such as childless marriages and an increasing divorce rate also contribute to keeping women in the workforce (Raymo and Lim, 2011).

Japanese women in the workforce are marginalized by and from the male-centered workplace structure. Large companies used to take care of the families of most the men in their employment, although benefits have become downsized in the current economic climate (Yu, 2010). Large Japanese companies provide corporate welfare, typically housing and family allowances, based on needs from male employees and their wives and children as subordinates (Fujimoto, 2004). Moreover, women are outside major Japanese employment systems such as permanent employment and seniority promotion (Suhihara & Katsumada, 2002). Sugihara & Katsurada point out women are free from the male socialization process that is typically part of senior-junior relationship because they are relatively new in the workforce; however, it means that women need to create relationships in other ways or somehow accommodate the male socialization practices. A study of career-minded women employed in large finance companies shows that women adapt to the workplace masculinity or opt out (Nemoto, 2012).

Japan is now facing a big demographic problem: depopulation with fewer children and a larger elder population (Statistic Bureau, 2013). Accordingly, the labor force population is expected to decrease in the future. To keep enough people in the labor force, the expectation on women to increase participation in the workforce has been growing (Gender Equality Bureau of Cabinet Office, 2012). There are debates over welcoming immigrants and postponing retirement age to supplement the lack of labor force; however, companies prioritize women over the elderly and foreigners because they are highly educated and underutilized Japanese assets. Some companies are successful in

advertising women friendly systems, but changing people's mentality is the hardest in Japan (Inada, 2007). The perception of women in the workforce is at the turning point because of the demographic change. Women's participation needs to be increased in all segments of corporate career opportunities; international assignment is an important one.

Japanese Expatriates in the United States

The practice of sending employees abroad has played a crucial role in the transnationalization of the Japanese economy in 1980s and 1990s (Yamada, 2004). The Japanese style of management is considered important in maintaining high productivity outside Japan (Hamada, 1992). Therefore, Japanese subsidiary companies in the U.S. needed expatriate Japanese managers, engineers, and other staff who are well trained and socialized in Japanese ways (Matsuo, 2000). Japanese workplace culture and loyalty to the parent company were also considered as important characteristics to establish Tokyo-centered systems in U.S. subsidiaries. In fact, Japanese companies send considerably more expatriates than companies from Western countries; therefore, corporate cultures reflect Japanese ones greatly (Brock et. al., 2008).

Communication between Japanese expatriates and Americans has been far from achieving mutual understanding. Because of language limitations, cultural gaps, and differences in business practices, Japanese expatriates often work only within their own culture group and do not communicate well with American employees (Linowes et al., 1993). The lack of language skills particularly hinders adequate development of interpersonal relationships between Japanese and Americans (Kurotani, 2005). Most expatriates leave America after three years; this causes American workers to see non-permanent expatriates just as visitors. American employees feel segregated, especially

when management teams are made up of Japanese individuals only, they do not consider their prospect for promotion high (Yamada, 2004). In the worst cases, cultural differences in gender perspectives cause sexual harassment lawsuits against Japanese companies (Shimada, 1999); and these lawsuits in the 1980s and 1990s triggered actualization of American rules and promote localization in painful ways in terms of huge monetary compensations and harm to company reputations.

Another division commonly reported is between Japanese expatriates and Japanese local hires. Although both of them are from Japan and working in the same company in America, expatriates have guaranteed life employment and high salaries, local-hires have short-term contracts with lower salaries (Aoyama & Sabo, 2011; Ben-Ari et. al., 2000). Local-hires often disapprove of the post-war Japanese social order such as the seniority system and the superiority of men over women.

Multinational companies generally provide assistance, advice, and benefits to their overseas transferees. Costs of sending expatriates are thought to be three times as high as staying at home due to “relocation costs, hardship allowances, housing allowances, schooling for children of the employee, spouse allowance, etc. (Hartl, 2003, p. 28).” Companies are changing their strategies to decrease costs of expatriates; the average number of expatriates is decreasing, and some positions are replaced with American nationals in 1990s (Yamada, 2004). The number of expatriate women has been gradually increasing in recent years, but the total number of expatriates has been decreasing slowly: 54,493 people in 2006 to 52,093 people in 2012 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2012).

It is a trend in all industrial countries that male of “elite” race dominates in international management: white men from North American companies and Japanese men at Japanese firms (Hartl, 2003, p. 29) Although research on expatriates has been formally gender neutral, the focus on male professionals strengthen the dominant image of expatriates as male, middle aged, married with children. Most Japanese expatriates are considered middle management or higher; and they belong to the middle class or higher in American society (Yamada, 2004). Japanese women have been absent in research, and they were primary homemakers of expatriate men (Kurotani, 2005). A symbolic expression in Yamada’s research was, “there is *even* an expatriate woman where her husband work at (2004, p. 205, emphasis added).” Women at international assignments were that rare in 2000s when the research was conducted.

International assignments had and perhaps still entail some prestige. Literature on career and management regards international assignments as a part of career development for potential senior managers; therefore underrepresentation of women has long-term negative effects on women’s careers (Hartl, 2003). However, the prestige of Japanese expatriates seemed to have passed its peak, and it is more of routine practice at Japanese large multinational firms (Kurotani, 2005). Some individuals believe that being away from Tokyo or their headquarters means an exile and fewer chances of future promotion. Others believe there is no spot to return in Japan to return after many years abroad. The declining level of prestige and women’s participation might be linked. Occupational feminization theory states the entry of women in the traditional male job could mean degradation of the occupation (Feurer, 1999). Queuing theory explains the situation from the opposite side; being an expatriate has become less attractive to men because benefit

and career prospects are not as high as before; hence, more opportunities are given to women and men of lower status (Shortland, 2009).

Women in International Assignments

Little is known about the effects of international assignments on Japanese women; and their careers; however, the study of Western women in international assignments, especially management, is an established field (Adler, 1984a, Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, Hearn et al., 2008, Napier & Taylor, 2002). More than 25 years of research has shown that women have made steady progress in the expatriate arena, but even they are still underrepresented (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). The purpose of this section is to review women in the international assignments based on existing literature of Western women considering its relevance to Japanese expatriates in the U.S.

Until the late 1980s, female expatriates were only 5 percent of total American expatriates, 1 percent of Japanese expatriates, and 9 percent of Finnish expatriates (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999). The ratio of female expatriates was far smaller than the ratio of women in management; 6.5 percent of international assignees are women compared with 22 percent of women in management in Australia (Caligiuri et al., 1999). When it comes to international assignments as managers, the glass ceiling and glass border reinforce each other (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). Considering the poor promotion rate of women in Japan, reaching international management positions is particularly difficult; Japanese women in the career track jobs are as rare for Western women to get managerial positions. Limited entry to career track positions and limited international assignments could also reinforce each other for the Japanese women's case.

There is a clear difference in the family structure of expatriates based on their gender. A study in Finland showed most men at international management are married and often have a housewife with an average of 2.5 children, whereas 15 percent of their female counterparts are single, divorced, or without partners, and 40 percent have no children (Hearn, 2008). Another study of UK-based organizations showed similar findings; 50 percent of female expatriates are single, whereas only 20 percent of men are (Harris, 2002). Interestingly, 44 percent out of the 50 percent of married women are accompanied by their partners, and 50 percent out of the 80 percent of married men are unaccompanied. The patterns for men are found for Japanese expatriates in the U.S. (Kurotani, 2005). Japanese women who wish to have family life often opt out from the Japanese workforce; therefore, it is likely that expatriate women are single or married without children.

Marital status of expatriates is a key factor in the selection process and corporate relocation support. Although dual-careers have become an issue for both male and female Western expatriates, there remains a selection bias, which continues to disadvantage women (Adler, 1984a; Altman & Shoreland, 2008; Shoreland, 2009). Company representatives associated dual-career couples mainly with the immobility of women, although men also reject international assignment because of their partners (Harvey, 1997). Expatriates unaccompanied by their family face difficulties in communicating with their families in their home country, and left behind spouses become single parents while expatriates are away. Those accompanying spouses often face greater relocation issues such as spouses' employment and children's education (Harris, 2002). The family's inability to adapt to the new environment is reported to affect expatriates' work

adjustment; therefore, dual-career expatriates benefit from flexible supports such as intra-company employment of their spouses and short-term assignments (Harris, 2002). Such supports were available only to the limited number of dual-career male employees from Western countries, and it is unattainable for most of the current female Japanese business expatriates.

Marital status also has an impact on their cross-cultural adjustment. Single expatriate women experience particular difficulty in adjusting to a host culture. Married women show greater adjustment to the host culture than single women because they receive emotional support from their families (Caligiuri et al., 1999). Single women are isolated from social interactions involving family. Moreover, some single women are also frustrated with the lack of dating opportunities (Taylor & Napier, 1996). Social relationships with men in the host nation are challenging for women because of their status is often higher than local men. In a country with a stigma on cross-gender friendships, culture norms could prevent host national men from freely interacting with women; therefore, women's access to social interaction and social support is limited (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002).

Besides marital status, Caligiuri et al. (1999) also found expatriates' ranks and company supports influence on cross-national adjustment. First, the ranks of expatriates make experiences uniquely different. Expatriates in higher ranks in organizations often adjust better. For example, a person in a managerial position has far greater financial resources, experience, authority, access to networks, and benefits than a trainee. Therefore, lower level female expatriates face more challenges in adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 1999). Second, company supports for females play an important role; corporate

supports such as cross-cultural training and relocation assistance aiming female are desirable (Caligiuri et al., 1999).

Additionally, corporate career development activities are less available for women (Selmer & Leung, 2003). Selecting female expatriates is an important step, and accommodating females' needs according to their situations is another step forward.

Women often have higher personal assets to adjust to cross-national relocations than men (Guthrie et. al., 2003). Personality traits such as openness, willingness to communicate, sociability, and ability to establish interpersonal relationships contribute to smoother cross-cultural adjustment, and these are more commonly reported among women (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). Social interaction brings important work-related and non-work-related information about culturally accepted norms and behaviors. Beyond personal character, language proficiency, working hours, and location of the office and residence also determine opportunities for social interaction (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). Even if an expatriate has favorable personal character for cross-cultural adjustment, poor English or long working hours that are common among Japanese expatriates could hinder social interactions.

In the early years of female managers' international assignments, there were three myths: 1) women are not interested in international careers; 2) companies are reluctant to dispatch women overseas; and 3) host nations are prejudiced against women (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). Adler (1984b) disproved the first myth with her research on women with MBA degrees; women were equally interested in international assignments. Because of the myth, decision makers misunderstood that qualified female managers wanted to go abroad (Napier & Taylor, 2002). The second myth is considered to have some truth. Fifty

three percent of Asian managers agree that a man is preferable for an international position given that qualifications and abilities are equal between candidates (Caligiuri, 1999, Stone, 1991). Major perceived obstacles for women abroad are safety, isolation, and dual career marriages (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). Adler argues the dual-career issue is used as an excuse for not selecting potential female expatriates (1984b). The dual-career issue has become a concern for 70 percent of expatriate managers (Harris, 2002); therefore, it is now an issue for both men and women.

The third myth turned out to be not true. When a woman is selected as an expatriate, she is considered more competent than a man (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999). Twenty percent of expatriate women experienced negative attitudes by host nationals, but 42 percent of women considered being a woman as an asset (Caligiuri et al., 1999). Moreover, even if men in host countries have negative attitudes toward women, expatriate managers are first seen as professionals or foreigners and their gender has secondary or less importance (Adler, 1987).

By carefully dispelling these myths and prejudices, research has provided evidence that women can equally accomplish international assignments. The current situation of female Japanese expatriates mirrors the formative years of female expatriates from Western countries. The number is still very small, and they are surrounded by myths and prejudices.

One unique challenge for female expatriates is the lack of mentors and role models (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). Having good mentors and role models is vital to one's career aspiration and development. Moreover, female mentors and role models provide examples for of gendered practices. When female mentors and role models

accommodate to or demonstrate her gender differently from workplace masculine culture and norms, women have a better idea about what is expected. Perhaps, Japanese expatriates find only a few female Japanese expatriates, if any. Without depending on female mentors or role models, most expatriate women need to find ways to survive in the male-dominated expatriate communities.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this research was to explore the social world of Japanese female expatriates and figure out how they reinforce or transform existing expatriate structure and how they do gender in their international assignments in the U.S. I implemented a qualitative approach to gather data for this research. In-depth interviews focusing on organizational and gendered practices were conducted with 20 respondents.

“Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 361). Giddens puts emphasis on what is being done than being said, on the other hand he also acknowledge that “[a]ctors will usually be able to explain most of what they do, if asked” (1984, p. 6). Although generalizability is limited compared with quantitative research, 20 case studies allow me the opportunity to explore their life world.

Sampling for this research was based on the convenience and the snowballing techniques. As there was no sampling frame that would allow direct means to contact expatriate women, availability and snowball sampling were the only ways to reach participants. To find respondents, I contacted people who potentially had some connection with Japanese business expatriates through my personal network, social networking site, and Japanese organizations in the U.S. Twenty interviewees were gathered through this process: 14 through convenience sample and 6 through snowballing sampling.

Female expatriates in the United States are involved in all types of job assignments such as training, management, technical work, marketing, human resource, and others.

Although the prior research on expatriates mainly focuses on managers (Hartl, 2004), managers are not necessarily the main component of overseas assignees.

Research on 329 expatriate women showed that managers are 30%, technical workers are 47%, and other workers are 24% (Harris, 2002). Therefore, this research included all kinds of job assignments across the United States. The shared characteristics for interviewees were Japanese women who work or have worked in America as part of their jobs for more than one year at companies that were partially or fully owned by Japanese companies. One respondent had an assignment shorter than one year, but I included her in the analysis because she fit into the patterns despite the length of her assignment.

Initial contact with potential interviewees was via e-mail. I explained the purpose of this research and asked potential participants to take time for an interview. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient time. As respondents were spread out across the U.S., most interviews were conducted via online formats. Sixteen were online; 12 interviews were via Adobe Connect, an online conference system with video and audio recording; three preferred not to or were unable to use video, hence only audio recording; and one preferred online text exchange via Google Talk. Four respondents lived in the same state as the researcher or a neighboring state. I met these four respondents at agreed times and places to conduct face-to-face interviews. Respondents were informed about broad topics that would be asked at interview, but not specific questions; 1) personal background, 2) work in Japan, 3) experience as an expatriate woman in America, and 4) work and life in America. The interviews were semi-structured with follow-up questions and probes focusing on gendered challenges in both private and professional domains.

All interviews were recorded; they were transcribed in Japanese and translated into English by the researcher. Interviews were in Japanese because it is the researcher and respondents' native language. Interviews lasted from an hour to two and a half hours, with the average interview lasting about one hour and thirty minutes. For the privacy of interviewees, names and company names were altered to avoid identification.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSES

This chapter focuses on respondent's personal background in private domain. Respondents' prior overseas experiences, age, and marital/relationship status in relation to international assignments are presented in this section.

Overseas Experiences

Most of the respondents had some overseas experiences prior to their current assignment, and these experiences benefited them in their being selected for and /or adjusting to new international assignments. Fifteen (75%) respondents had some experiences in living outside of Japan, and five women (25%) had no experience living overseas before their assignment.¹

Four respondents had one or several years of study abroad experience.² Two received undergraduate degrees from universities in the United States; and one received a master's degree in Australia. The three who received their highest degrees outside of Japan were educated in Japan before their highest degrees. Four spent their childhood in the United States, Britain, or India for three to seven years. They lived abroad because their fathers were international business assignees themselves.

There is a tendency for those who were educated overseas as children to come back for university education in Japan, and those who were educated in Japan until high

¹ They did not have overseas living experience, but two had business trips or travel experiences, and one had considered studying abroad at high school and in college and thus very open to an international posting. Only two informants did not mention any experience or interest.

² They spent a year or more at educational institutions abroad, and graduate from Japanese universities. Destinations were not limited to English speaking countries: America (2 people), Canada and Germany (1 person), and Spain (1 person).

school or university to seek study abroad either full or part of their university times. This tendency applied to 11 (55%) participants.

Besides family and educational reasons, homestay and work were also opportunity for overseas living experiences. Two respondents had homestay experiences in America, Australia, and New Zealand each lasting for about 2 weeks. Three respondents went overseas with companies' support: three months of language training in the United States, six months of internship in Spain, one year work assignment in China.

Reasons for living overseas had three types: family, personal (education and homestay), and business reasons. These experiences led to enhanced interest in working at multinational firms and taking international business assignments; the experiences also promoted smooth adjustment to a new environment.

Yamada (2005, p. 219) found that daughters of international assignees also expressed wishes to work at companies that practiced expatriatism in the future. Just like her respondents, one of my interviewees said, "My father worked at Shosha [multinational trading company], so I also wanted to be engaged in business overseas" (Interview 12, single, age 40). However, she continued:

Yet, I also wanted to get married and have children, so I was on non-career-track at first.... The company gives opportunities to employees; as I work hard at the company I was assigned to responsible jobs that are beyond the area of non-career-track. Then I learned how interesting business could be, and I began to be interested in shifting to career-track. After 10 years at the company, I shifted from non-career-track to career-track in 2006 (Interview 12, single, age 40)

Japanese gender norms had a great impact on her career choice. She did not consider following her father's path straight ahead in a career-track job was feasible when she entered the company. She said, "When I joined the company, there was only one career-track woman.... I think I wouldn't have been able to get a career-track position back

then” (Interview 12, single, age 40). Another interviewee also said, “I wanted to be a bridge between Japan and overseas just like any Kikoku-shijyo [who lived abroad at childhood and returned to Japan] would say because we’re fluent in English” (Interview 11, single, age 25). She also had a traditional idea on family and work:

I want to get married and have kids. That’s everything about life, I think. I want to focus on raising my children. I want to be at home when they return from school. ... Family is more important than having a full-time job (Interview 11, single, age 25).

Although they were exposed to more gender equal societies at early stages of their lives, the respondents did not necessarily have progressive views on women in the workplace, at least in the early stages of their careers. If they had, they could have been eliminated through the recruiting process or chose to work at a different company because they would not fit into Japanese firms, which were cohesive, conservative, and with high degrees of gender inequality (Ono, 2007). They were raised in a more gender equal societies such as Australia, America, or Britain for years; however, their family typically followed the male breadwinning model with fathers worked at Japanese companies and mothers stayed at home. Moreover, they were aware that they would go back to Japan at some point even when they were overseas. This made expatriate families worry about children’s re-integration to Japan (Yamada, 2005). Therefore, overseas experiences in childhood have limited influences upon their gender norms for those who choose to work at Japanese companies.

Other informants with international experience were also generally interested in working overseas or being engaged in overseas business despite length and content of overseas experience. Respondents with study abroad experiences said:

I was looking for companies that I could engage in overseas business in the future. I wanted to work overseas as an expatriate. ... I know how it is like to study abroad from my experience in Spain. I wanted to have work experience overseas as a next step (Interview 14, single, age 32).

I really wanted to be engaged in the international business. Even though I would work at a Japanese company, I wanted to work abroad at some point in the future even temporarily (Interview 7, single, age 29).

Their interest in overseas business was fostered through their study abroad experiences.

Motivation to work at overseas locations can also be fostered after joining companies. An individual who had company-sponsored language training in America said, "If I didn't have a language training, I wouldn't think about working overseas (Interview 2, single, age 30)." She pointed out the importance of business trips and training overseas to have global minds for Japanese employees.

Overall, informants had developed their interest in working at or with overseas businesses through their families (typically as a child of an expatriate family), personal (typically study abroad), or work (language training, business trips, and other business assignments) related overseas experiences.

The experiences of living overseas are advantages to adjusting to a new environment. There is a positive relationship between international living experience and general adjustment; however, there is not between international living experience and work adjustment (Parker & McEvory, 1993). Takeuchi and colleagues (2005) also found that prior U.S. experience for Japanese expatriates has a moderating effect on general adjustment but not on work adjustment.³ Their research has male participants only in the

³ According to Takeuchi et al. (2005, p. 88): When individuals visit foreign countries, the people that they observe the most tend to be the ones with whom they interact the most frequently in everyday encounters. As a result, the content of learning --- that is, the routines or schemata appropriate for functioning in the culture --- tend to be

sample, but the trend is relevant to the current study. Those who have longer exposure to living in English speaking countries have fewer troubles with language and culture in daily life and those who have no or little exposure have more troubles. However, even for those with years of experience living overseas, work adjustment is more challenging than general adjustment.

It's good that it's not my first time to live in America. I can handle the life style, culture, and communications smoothly (Interview 7, single, age 29).

It's different to experience overseas as a student and a company employee. I experienced surviving in an environment without much knowledge about the language and life in Canada at high school. I took care of everything about my life from scratch at university [in Germany]. These experiences at school years made me feel confident in living overseas; this served me well to work in China and now in America. I feel I was extremely lucky.

The two years in China were my first time to work overseas. This experience shaped who I am now; I don't worry about working overseas.... I don't have any trouble in daily life, but technical terms and expressions at work are still challenging (Interview 10, single, age 34).

Daily conversations are fine, but my vocabulary is limited. So, in some formal situations, I'm not that competent.... I'm used to adapting to a new environment (Interview 11, single, age 25).

The extent to which individuals struggled in general and in work adjustment depended on their language and cultural familiarity to function in the given domains. Those who did not have any overseas experience often struggled in general and in work adjustment; however, if they have engaged in the business with U.S. companies or if U.S. office culture is similar to the Japanese one to a great degree, then they do not consider work adjustment to be harder than general adjustment:

predominantly domain specific. In this regard, prior international nonwork experience would logically be helpful for creating and developing routines and schemata that benefit adjustment to general environment (that is, general adjustment), but this knowledge and familiarity may not necessarily translate to an expatriate's work environment (that is, work adjustment).

I came to Silicon Valley often on business trips, and I communicated with business partners via telephone meetings, so I didn't have many surprises over business. But in daily life, I had some troubles; I couldn't communicate well with people at a rental car shop because of my poor pronunciations for instance. I didn't get what I want for a customer support through voice recognition system on the phone. I think that more problems stem from culture than language (Interview 17, single, age 37).

I don't have [language] problems at work in reading English articles and writing reports. Some colleagues are from Japan or understand Japanese, so I don't have to use English on daily basis at work.... I think [office] culture is almost the same as in Japan (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

Overall, those with more overseas experience adjusted to daily life better, but they did not necessarily have advantage in adjusting to work environments. However, familiarly with business practices and non-differential business culture in the U.S. also determined how well they fit into their assigned environments in America.

Age⁴

Age was a potentially sensitive issue for men and women undertaking international assignments. Age mattered more on expatriates' private life than work; they were away from private networks in Japan, so they worried about its impact on their lives such as relationships, getting married, or having children. As most of the respondents were not married but had intentions to get married and have children, age was a sensitive issue. The average age of respondents was 31.85 years old. This group was significantly younger than Takeuchi and colleagues' sample of Japanese expatriates (2005). However, their gender-neutral research had only men in the sample; and their average age was 38.99 with a range from 26 to 61 years old. In the current research, the youngest interviewee was 25 years old and the most experienced was 43 years old. Five

⁴ Respondent age is calculated through their birth year even if they have not reached their birthday. For those who have finished their assignments, their ages are at the time when they started the assignment.

participants were between 25 to 29 years old, 11 were between 30 and 34 years old, 2 were between 35 and 39 years old, and 2 were between 40 and 45 years old. Clearly, expatriate women of older ages are missing in this study. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted in 1985; and the percentage of women at higher positions was very low in Japan. Thus, female international assignees were often relatively young.

Five of the participants considered that the assignment was mainly for young members of a company even if the purpose of the assignment was not training. The participants' understanding of why companies wanted to send young individuals was the easiness with which they could relocate; young employees were most often single and did not have a family to relocate with or parents in need of elderly care. The companies, therefore, assumed young single individuals had more flexibility for relocation than married individuals. A participant said, "Business trips would be fine regardless of one's [family] background. But expatriate positions tend to go young employees" (Interview 13, single, age 31). Moreover, two participants mentioned time to start the assignment was pressing when they were informed about the assignments; one had only two weeks to prepare. In terms of the financial burden on the company in sending expatriates, a respondent commented, "I'm single and the one in the UK is also single... I think singles cost less to send overseas. I think the company considers that point to some extent, although I don't know for sure" (Interview 15, single, age 31). Being young and single allowed extra flexibility required in some international assignments. These were not the qualities that the companies officially sought; but respondents felt assignees were young and single which assured extra flexibility.

Unlike the previous study on women in international management, Japanese young women do not seem to face “wrong age” (too young) and “wrong status” (single) problems for international assignments (Altman & Shoreland, 2008). Three respondents mentioned that human resource or co-workers cared about their young age and gender, but they were not perceived with a negative manner probably because they were at lower positions.

The impact of assigned term abroad on private life is not gender specific; men and women have concerns in missing so-called marriageable age. A woman at human resource said:

Men also miss timing to marry when they spend Toshi-goro [suitable age (for marriage)] overseas. I actually know many of them. I think the difficulty is the same for single men and women in finding a partner (Interview 2, single, age 30).

She showed sympathy to men probably because she knew more about men’s situations than other respondents. Then she continued, “Women have a limit in childbirth; that makes a difference (Interview 2, single, age 30).” Respondents showed concerns about their age particularly when they were single. Single women worried about relationships and marriage; and married respondents worried about having a child:

Three years [of assignment] would be fine, but five years is a little too long. To be honest, I worry about my age; I worry about my private life.... I am not sure if I can go abroad in the future considering my age, so I think it’s better to go sooner than later. It’ll be difficult once I have a family. It’ll be close to impossible if I had a child (Interview 2, single, age 30).

When I heard about it, I was 34, so I hesitated a little bit.... I left at 34, no 35, then would return at 40. The possibility of meeting a partner and having a child was extremely low. Yet, the kind of job was very attractive.... I have no regret in coming, because work here was so interesting and I met interesting people through work, but it would be better if I could have been here a little younger (Interview 12, single, age 40).

Five years [of assignment] is a little tough. But I might have accepted.... It's tough when I think about marriage and children. But I think I will accept because I don't know if I actually get married (Interview 14, single, age 32).

I was 29 years old back then; I thought about Tekirei-ki [marriageable age]. If I would reach 30 over there, I am 30 now, marriage would be a lot more difficult. Now I don't care too much about it. ... Women have to face suitable age for marriage earlier than men in general. I wouldn't have complex feelings about it if I were a man. That is the difference between men and women (Interview 15, single, age 31).

If the assignment was longer, I might have hesitated. I think the longest I can accept is for two years. I think about my age; I want to have a child (Interview 6, married without children, age 29).

Years in the U.S. were considered as a loss for their private lives. Respondents were away from their social circles in Japan and were generally not interested in finding a partner in the U.S.; therefore, they postpone their private life plans: to find a partner, to get married, or to have a child. However, one respondent who found a partner in the U.S. reported:

I cared about my age when I was in Japan by seeing my friends getting married; I was somewhat frustrated. But I realized age shouldn't control my life; life should be about what you want to achieve. ... I changed my thoughts on how I view family and life. I worry less about being in my thirties. I cannot postpone marriage until too late considering a childbirth, but I was worried because of peer pressure (Interview 20, single, age 30).

Her fear of aging was formed by peer pressure in Japan, and that has modified through socialization in America. At the point when the respondents were told of their international assignments, they pondered about their ages and accepted its impact on their lives; they came to be free from pressure in Japanese society and reconstructed their views on aging once they lived in America.

Marital Status and Relationships

Marital and relationship status also had an impact on whether expatriate women would accept international assignments and work and private life during their assignments. There is a clear trend that expatriate women were often single (15 women, 75%). Single respondents reported that taking international assignments would have been difficult if they were married and even more so if they had had children. A few considered it possible under some circumstances, yet the overall trend suggested that they could take an international assignment because they were single and had flexibility to relocate.

When women are single or married without children, they can work like men do. However this work/life balance becomes extremely challenging once women have children. Nineteen participants (95%) were single or married without children; 15 participants were single and 4 were married without children; only one was married with a child. Among the five married individuals, two came without husbands leaving them in Japan (for one year), two were assigned because their husbands were assigned (unspecified term), and one took her husband with her (for three years).

The first group of respondents is married respondents without their spouses. Their assignments are short: both of them for one year. They did not consider taking their husbands with them to the U.S. as that would disrupt their own career paths. As they lived in the U.S. they faced gaps between themselves and Americans or expatriate men. A respondent experienced that American coworkers do not understand why a wife moves without her husband:

People in America didn't understand why I didn't take my husband with me. I explained many times, but to no avail. Everyone thinks families should be together (Interview 7, single, age 29).

Another respondent who left her husband in Japan less than 1 year after their marriage pointed out that expatriate men do not understand her feelings:

I was very lonely in the U.S. at first, ... and I felt sorry [for my husband] for being apart soon after marriage.... I worry about things that male expats do not worry about. My heart is torn apart because I left my husband in Japan, and men don't understand that (Interview 3, married without children, age 30).

She also said, "It is too much burden if my husband quits his job just to be with me.

Rather, I want him to continue to work and take care of our home in Japan" (Interview 3, married without children, age 30). She did not consider that her situations allow her to completely overturn a traditional male relocation model and to be the central player in international relocation. She did not intend to be the sole provider either; however, she considered her that husband, by remaining in Japan, was responsible for taking care of the house, a gendered term mostly for women. She continued to point out benefits for a couple to be married when wife is assigned to another country:

If we weren't married by then, I would worry about losing him a lot. My boss also told me it's better that we're married because it sounds more legitimate to take leaves from work to meet his wife than his girlfriend. I don't think men would understand, but it is reassuring that my husband, a member of my family, supports me (Interview 3, married without children, age 30).

For psychological and practical reasons, she thought being married and supported by her husband was for the best.

These two women experienced difficulties being outside the assumed gender norms. It made them feel gaps between them and people around them. The latter woman also blamed herself but reached the conclusion that it was the best under the given circumstances. They did not experience reflexivity in the U.S. probably because they

were not exposed to American culture to the extent they feel so. It could be partly because their assignment was short and they did not interact with Americans.

The second group was women who came to the U.S. for their husbands' assignments. The length of their assignments was unspecified, and they will stay in the U.S. as long as their business goes well. According to them, it is not the company policy to send both husband and wife, but the company did so. They claimed that it happened because their husbands were in the same company groups. If they were employed at totally unrelated companies, they would not have been in the U.S. as corporate assignees. One was not married when she heard about her husband's assignment; they got married, and the company sent her with him. The other was on maternity leave when she heard about her husband's assignment. She was assigned with her husband and returned to work in the U.S. after extended childcare leave when their son reached one year old. Within the same company or associated groups, companies can be flexible in considering spouses' relocation. Otherwise, they said working in the U.S. would have been difficult.

They could come with their husbands because they worked within the corporate groups. One of them expressed she was not comfortable to be seen as a secondary assignee:

Before I came, people considered my assignment was because of my husband's work; I was seen just as a wife. It was extremely unpleasant for me. That motivated me to work hard, too. Because it [coming here because of my husband] is a fact (Interview 9, married without children, age 30).

Being assigned because of her husband hurt her self-esteem as a corporate worker.

However, she pointed out difficulties to become a primary assignee in the IT industry:

It is difficult for women becoming an expatriate with their own abilities. They need to be programmers or designers; they can't be so unless they have some sort

of expertise. ... It is tough for women to be an expatriate even if they really want to (Interview 9, married without children, age 30).

She took care of corporate finance and general affairs; she fitted into the gaps that experts do not cover. She said, “Here most of the expatriates focus only on their fields, so all kinds of general affairs come to me. There’s no one else who takes care of the minor things” (Interview 9, married without children, age 30). She reproduced gender expectations at work that men take main area to bring profits to the company, and women do supporting work.

The other woman who had a child experienced the lack of support by the company. Companies provided many kinds of allowances including housing, transportation, travel expenses to Japan, and expatriate allowance; however, the model was based on single expatriates or married couples with traditional family lifestyles, so there had not been the need to provide childcare support for preschool kids. The company support systems did not incorporate those needs:

The difference between my family and expat families before is that they don't need to find daycare like us. Because I'm not a stay at home mother. When a child reaches school age, the cost of childcare wouldn't be so big as we face (Interview 5, married with a child, age 33).

When women were at international assignments, they could not rely on their family network or national welfare systems. At the assigned location, they relied on corporate welfare programs to meet their needs:

No predecessors experienced the case like ours. I'm asking the company to expand support to accommodate our needs. Childcare service is pretty expensive in San Francisco, so I am asking HR to provide some allowances (Interview 5, married with a child, age 33).

The corporate welfare programs were created through the needs of men or women of quasi men's work style: single or married without children. Therefore, when expatriate

women were working mothers, they needed to transform the corporate welfare structure to incorporate their needs.

The third group, although only one respondent fit the pattern, was a married expatriate who took her husband with her. She overturned the male led married couple's relocation model and faced challenges in breaking the norm. Her husband was supportive in applying for the opening position in New York, which was publically announced in her company. He was willing to support her partly because he was in the art-related industry and interested in working in New York. However, it was not well received or understandable for some people with traditional mindsets:

My friends said, "That's good for you." But some of the friends who are not so close to me said, "What are you going to do with your husband!?" I said, "He'll come with me to NY as my dependent family." They replied, "What do you mean?" "I don't understand" or "What are you thinking about?" They didn't understand why I could do this despite being married (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

She did not confine herself with the gendered norms, but when she faced these comments she felt uncomfortable. She even felt some guilt when she told her parents about the assignment:

I felt sorry for my parents because I was old enough but still without a child and leaving to NY. I called my mom to say sorry, and she said, "Don't be sorry. I'm proud of you." ... My mother in law said, "My son's wife is brilliant!" My husband is from the countryside in Kyushu [an island in south of Japan], so I was a little worried (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

She felt troubled or uncomfortable when friends and colleagues did not understand her situations, but she felt sorry and guilty to face her parents. She anticipated generational differences on gender at family domain, and expected fairer response from people from her peers. Their responses were contrary to her expectations. She encountered two opposite reactions in America; locally hired employees were supportive of her husband

finding art-related work in New York, and expatriate men saw her husband with curiosity:

Other expatriates are surprised like, “Did you really come with your husband?” I say, “Yes, just like you and your wife although we don’t have kids yet.” They ask me that all the time. [Expatriate] men’s reactions are like that. Local staff encourages me. They say, “It’s good for him to be in NY with his [art-related] work.” or “I know other couples that wives work and husbands follow them” (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

Expatriate men continued to see her through traditional norms, and local members of her company were more liberal and understanding of her situation.

The company was fine about her husband to go with her, but the system is based on man-led relocation model, so having a dependent husband was an irregular case:

I made my husband as my dependent family in Japan. When I did so, the company said that my husband cannot work in America. I didn’t understand why, and nobody in the company gave me a satisfying answer. In the end, they said, “He can work as long as he doesn’t earn over the dependent limit [in Japan].” There is no dependent limit in America; and it is meaningless for my husband to come with me if he cannot work in America. The issue has not been solved yet, but we are here. We have to do something about it. The present system premises male expatriates with wives who take care of house. I have troubles because we aren’t like that (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

The company tried to apply a Japanese rule of dependent spouse income limit to her husband; the rule premised the male-breadwinning model and wives dependency on husbands. There was no clear explanation to back up the reason why spouses should not work in America. Her husband was supportive about her applying for the post in NY, and he started to work as a freelance in the PR design industry. He was happy to follow her to NY as trailing spouse, but she recalled that he had some frustrations about not having a job.

Another issue that she faced was about her surname. She continued to use her maiden name at work after marriage and officially changed her surname to her husband's name⁵:

I use Matsushita, my maiden name, at work. My official surname is Sakuma, my husband's family name, but I don't use that at work. When I applied for visa, it was a little complicated; Sakuma is not what I use at work, so I asked both names to be on my visa (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

Upon marriage, 96% of couples choose the husband's name, so inconveniences for the paperwork is on the wife's side (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2006).

Expatriate men assumed expatriates share similar background and values like theirs; they were the powerful majority in the expatriate communities that lack in imagination and sensitivity to minorities. At a conference when many expatriates from Japan were gathered, one respondent reported her experience of this isolation:

They started with a conversation about golf; they talked about it for about an hour! I couldn't join the conversation. Then they talked about unaccompanied assignments as the best way to unwind without their wives. Again, I couldn't join the conversation. It wasn't like men intentionally ignored me, but they couldn't find a topic to share with me. Eventually, they asked, "Are you married?"... "What do you mean? Please explain it again." was their reactions. I thought it was rude in a way that some of them explained about my husband to others, "Her husband came with her because he didn't have [corporation] roots." I didn't think it was out of meanness, but they didn't have imagination for a different world from theirs (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

She continued to explain that expatriate men are elites in Japanese large companies with cohesive backgrounds with prestigious education and promising careers. Expatriate men's minds on international assignment cannot shift easily from traditional men's relocation model because they have socialized mainly with people of similar backgrounds. This made expatriate women uncomfortable and isolated:

⁵ A couple has to choose either husband or wife's family name upon marriage. It is not possible under Japanese law to separate family names or keep both names.

The system basically premises expatriate men with their wives and children. ... There was a corporate benefit explanation with a model family of three: employee, wife, and child (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

While this respondent was a unique case in the structure, she highlights how traditionally male-focused gendered norms were imbedded deep in the structure. Companies need to recognize and incorporate her situation; otherwise she and those who will follow her path will continue to feel isolated. If they are not considered as equal members within the company, they may lose motivation to work for the company and leave in the worst case. Expatriate communities should acknowledge and embrace the diversity of backgrounds so that they will not lose women with potentials.

Expatriate men have power and prestige in the Japanese expatriate communities but they are minorities in the wider American society. As Napier and Taylor pointed out, being a minority in the home culture was a merit at international assignment because they were better equipped to conquer discrimination and exclusion (2002). She found men complained about American society more:

Men around me tend to complain about white supremacy; I've never heard about that from women. When you think about it, men in their 40s and 50s receive the most respect and care in Japan. They are the majority and have a strong voice. They have more difficulty in adapting to a different environment (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

Compared with men, women were better prepared to adjust to another environment because they had been the minority in the home society and continued to be so in the host society. Ethnic and cultural adjustment was easier for Japanese women because of their status as minorities due to their home gendered social status. The power balance in the home and host society changes much more dramatically for men. Women continued to be

power minority in both societies and reflect their gendered norms that women were at disadvantaged status, but the situation was better in America.

Single women were most of the respondents (15 women, 75%). They differed in age and the length of their assignments; married ones were more cohesive in their age (from 29 to 33) and the length of their assignments (those without husbands for 1 year, those who followed husbands for unspecified term, and those who initiated husbands' relocation for 3 years). They do gender according to relationship status, age, and the length of assignments; they were generally sensitive about the impact of international assignments on their personal lives. Yet, women could make commitment to work like men when they were single or married without children. This might make the assignment of married individuals with children more difficult because single women helped to recreate the norm that international assignment would be difficult when they were married. Some single women considered that they could come because they were not married:

I now think that I was able to come here because I am single. The company side might have considered that. ... I was told prospective assignees could decline the offer for private reasons (Interview 7, single, age 29).

Most of them were not in a relationship when their assignments were determined. Being in a relationship did not necessarily become the primary reason to decline the assignments, but some women felt it to be easier to accept when they were not in a relationship:

There was another opportunity to work overseas when I was 31 years old. I talked my boyfriend at that time, and he said, "You can go, but I don't have confidence to continue this relationship if you leave." That wasn't the only issue, but I didn't apply for the opportunity then. If I had someone who I would marry, then the impact of overseas experience on private life would be very big. I don't have that kind of influence on my private life though (Interview 19, single, age 36).

When I heard about it [the assignment], I was 34, so I hesitated a little bit. But I didn't have anyone at that time; eventually I thought it should be fine (Interview 12).

If they had someone, they could have declined their assignments or at least felt more difficulty in taking an assignment. One respondent with a boyfriend in Japan said women did not have an option to initiate marriage and take her partner:

If I were a man, I would want to marry my partner to take with me. It is rare for women to be an expatriate and more so to ask a man to quit his job to follow his wife or girlfriend (Interview 12, single, age 40).

There is gendered expectation on women not to initiate marriage or relocation, and nobody in the single sample broke the unwritten codes. Taking their husbands was difficult enough for married individuals. It would be more challenging to for single couples to decide.

Three women said that they had boyfriends in Japan. Their boyfriends were understanding about their assignments, and two of them told that the importance of knowing when the assignment would end to plan their life.

My boyfriend understood my decision and supported me. We know when the program will end, and that was an important point. Normal overseas assignments vary from three to five years. If the term were unclear, it would be difficult to decide a life plan after that. ... Having clear information when it would end was important for my boyfriend to understand (Interview 4, single, age 27).

It is good for my career, so he didn't oppose or anything. But if the term was a lot longer, I might have declined the offer. ... I was worried because I didn't know when it would end. Orally, I'm told it will be two to three years, and it normally is, but there is no contract or promise. If situations of the company change and I have to stay for many more years, there is nothing I can do. I am worried because I have no promise. ... I cannot make plans without knowing when the assignment will end (Interview 19, single, age 36).

In order for their boyfriends to understand and to make plans after the assignments, knowing how long the assignment would be and when it would end were important. It would also make it easier for the women to ask their boyfriends to wait for them.

Among the women with boyfriends in Japan, one planned to marry after the assignment; however, she found a new partner in America. She explained the difficulty to be on her own in a new environment:

I was going to get married after 2 years of assignment. ... I thought I could do it for 2 years. ... We broke up. I got a new partner here. I didn't have anyone to rely on here, and that was very tough. That made me to choose my current partner over him. ... I couldn't speak English at all, and he always helped me when I was in trouble. I didn't know much about American culture... I appreciate that he was by my side when I faced things that I had no clue about: how to replace tires, where to shop certain things, and so on (Interview 20, single, age 30).

The other two women in Japan had one year study abroad experience unlike her; she did not have experience in living overseas. Having less overseas experience might be a factor finding a partner in America. Without much knowledge about language and culture, having a boyfriend from the host country helped her mentally and practically.

Another woman without a boyfriend in Japan had a positive attitude toward finding a partner in America. She also had little overseas experience (10 days of homestay in America). She said, "I am open to finding a partner. I begin to think that I want to settle in America" (Interview 13, single, age 31). In her case, she went to an English school while she worked in Japan and waited for many years to get a position in America; so she was willing to adapt her hard won dream environment. However, these attitudes were the minority among the single women.

Most single women consider finding a partner in the U.S. to be unrealistic; the reasons vary from preference for Japanese partners, priority to work, the lack of

opportunity, and short assignments. They were not particularly interested in finding a partner in America; the most common response was that they preferred Japanese men. Four women mentioned that they prefer Japanese men as partners. When finding available Japanese men was difficult, this did not enhance their motivation to find a partner:

I prefer Japanese, so it's difficult. There are Japanese women who work in the local area, but there aren't many men. I meet other expatriates and exchange business cards, but I didn't see anyone in particular (Interview 2, single, age 30).

I think it is difficult in general. There are only a few [single Japanese men]. Japanese are not so many. ... If I meet someone, I'm lucky. But I cannot put my work aside for finding someone. Finding the right person in America would require a lot more effort compared to Japan. I wasn't very active in finding a partner in Japan either (Interview 10, single, age 34).

I've always wanted a Japanese [as my partner]. Japanese here are mainly married expatriates or students. There aren't many single men around my age, so it's close to impossible to find one. I've seen just a few single engineers (Interview 11, single, age 25).

I prefer Japanese. I don't have concrete reasons, but I just prefer Japanese. Returning to Japan is one thing. I want my partner to understand Japanese language and be familiar with food I grew up with. It is partly because I lived abroad in my childhood (Interview 12, single, age 40).

There were not many Japanese men to date and respondents were not active in finding one, so they prioritize work over finding a partner. The combination of the three made them more likely to be without partners. They were supposed to go back to Japan after the assignments, and they had a strong sense of responsibility toward work:

I don't intend to [find my partner here]. I'm not the type to actively look for someone; that's not important for me. ... I can't imagine living here forever (Interview 14, single, age 32).

I'm aware that the company has invested on me, and I need to pay it back to the company. ... Some say, "Find a millionaire in America and get married!" I didn't encounter anyone who insisted that I should contribute to the company until the

company would get adequate return from investing on me. But I think it's the way it should be (Interview 17, single, age 37).

They did not find a partner because they prioritized work including their future return to Japan. For these reasons, they did not consider a foreign country as the best place to find a partner. Some of them were not particularly active in finding a partner in Japan either. Their passiveness in finding a partner seemed to stem mostly from their commitment to work, and limited access to single Japanese men.

Although it was not a prevailing story, four respondents said that companies were concerned about single women's risk of getting married with host country nationals and not returning. Respondents considered this as speculation, rumor, old-fashioned thinking, or bias. This perspective could push some women to concentrate more on work and fulfill duties as expatriates:

I once was told, "You wouldn't marry a local person and settle there, would you?"... I guess that was why more married men were preferred in the past (Interview 14, single, age 32).

I've heard there were cases [that women got married overseas and didn't return] in the past. I know as a rumor that my company doesn't send woman abroad because of that (Interview 19, single, age 36).

I've heard that expatriate women will get married overseas as if it is the plausible truth. I think it is a bias against women. That makes some women to feel intimidated to raise a hand and pursuit [international assignments]. People around women are judgmental to assume it's impossible for women. Biases are not easy to see at the first sight [, but they exist] (Interview 17, single, age 37).

Two respondents reported cases of expatriates getting married and not returning to Japan; one was a woman's case, and the other was man's case. As expatriate women have been small in number, it becomes more sensational and memorable, but finding a partner at any foreign location could happen to either sex, and articulating the point only for women is not fair. It is true that international marriage between Japanese women and American

men outnumber marriage between American men and Japanese women (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, 2009); however, applying the trend to expatriate women is premature. Expatriates had sense of responsibilities as international assignees and were aware of their future returns.

Among 15 single respondents, 2 used family metaphors to describe their companies: their bosses as parents and themselves as their daughters. “Company as family” was a common idiom in Japan, “shaping workers’ lives and creating disciplined, loyal employees who strive to achieve group goals” (Kondo, 1990, p. 161). Senior members cared about assignees life as if they were their own daughters:

I am single, and when I heard about this international appointment from my boss, he asked if it’s okay to assign me overseas considering my private life at this stage and timing. ... I think it is similar to a parental concern. ... My boss’ generation has children of about my age. They wonder if it really is okay to send a woman abroad alone, where she doesn’t have family and friends. I’m thankful about his concerns (Interview 12, single, age 40).

One assignee saw herself as the eldest daughter to experience expatriatism as one of the first female employees:

I feel responsibilities; I must accomplish my assignment. Because I’m the first one [woman] here. It’s like being the eldest daughter in a family (Interview 10, single, age 34).

Other women in the sample also mentioned that colleagues and bosses showed extra care for them because of gender and age and felt responsibilities to be invested as an expatriate and to be the first expatriate women. The family metaphor explained the underlying mechanism to create a strong bond between a company and employees. Family was not a gender free term; it was so-called a gender factory to reproduce and pass on gendered norms to the next generation (Berk, 1985). Organizations were not

gender free either, but they officially are. Using family metaphor means in organizations legitimized gendered practices at Japanese corporations.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSES

This chapter focuses on the respondents' work and organizational sphere.

Respondents' career ambitions, expatriatism on their careers, the lack of role models, and networking pattern are presented in the section.

Career Ambitions

Career ambitions of respondents were generally low despite their privileged status: educational backgrounds, international experiences, and companies' investment or trust of them. They supported the importance to reach higher positions as to keep healthy motivation or to make greater impacts. Nonetheless, most of them were passive in aiming higher in organizations or did not consider promotions as their professional goals. Two major reasons were family (either they prioritized family over work or tried to balance family and work) and lack of role models in Japan. Only a few women stated that promotions as their personal goals. Fifteen women (75%), including ones with career ambitions, agreed that they wanted or intended to continue their careers after having families; but they did not have female managers as their role models.

I want to continue to work. Having an occupation is very important. As for promotion, I don't want to sacrifice other things for promotion. I want to continue to work in the way that fits my lifestyle. If that hinders promotions, I'm okay with it. ... I don't have a concrete life plan, but I might get married and have a family, or my parents my might need elderly care in the future. There are such things in life, and I want to work where I can be flexible according to these life events (Interview 19, single, age 36).

I would not oppose to be a manager. But, I can't be like male managers; I need to balance it with my family. I think social and personal changes are necessary. ... I don't have a role model now. I don't know a woman who is higher than section chief (Interview 3, married without children, age 30).

There are two women in the executive board, but none of them have a child. It's either family or career for women. I want to have both. ... I think men just leave childcare to women; it depends on couples though. Balancing work and private life is difficult for managers. ... I want to reach an upper management position in the future (Interview 4, single, age 27).

As for promotion, only if I have opportunities. ... The number [of women at higher positions] is very limited [in Japan]. There are section chiefs, but I don't think there's any general manager. The company I'm assigned here and its parent company in America have more women at managerial positions; it's just so normal here (Interview 12, single, age 40).

I want to continue to work for many years for sure. Promotions would be nice if possible. Hmm, I hate losing; I'm a bad loser. From that perspective, I guess I want promotions (Interview 15, single, age 31).

They do gender as current or future mothers and wives, with high expectation as primary caretakers of children and households. The reflexivity of career ambition was limited; learning about more equal career opportunities for women in America did not free them from Japanese organizational structure and unfriendly environment for working mothers in Japan. Yet, a woman reflected her thoughts:

There are many women in the management team. In my department it's 50:50. I don't think the company as a whole has that ratio. For them, women at the management positions are not enough yet. For Japanese, there're surprisingly many. Women are far less than 50% in Japan. ... That makes me change my idea about promotion a little. Women in the management have been like a dream, but now I can have clearer images (Interview 10, single, age 34).

Her internal image of managers became clearer in America, but to what extent the image could be transferred to Japanese corporate culture was not yet certain. She at least had a better picture of being in the management for women than when she was in Japan:

Q: Do you have role models at higher positions?

A: Yes, I do. Do I really want to be like them...? Hmm. They spent more years at the company and now at senior management. It is good to know that women can also reach that position; they are role models in that sense. But, I don't know their family or private lives. So they are only partial role models. The number of

women in the company is limited; so it is difficult to have a clear image. That is a social problem at large. That's a difficult issue (Interview 10, single, age 34).

Although she considered promotion was what women should aim for, her personal career ambition was not very high. The passiveness for promotions among women was mostly due to the lack of role models and difficulty balancing work and private life. The perceived importance of promotions was not directly translated into personal career ambition for this reason.

Expatriatism on Careers

Most of the respondents believed that expatriatism had a positive impact on work after repatriation. They gained knowledge, skills, and networks that would be beneficial after returning to Japan; however, not many of them related the expatriatism with career advancement. The perceived benefit was clear when their work at assigned locations were consistent with previous and future work in their department. To know people (network), to practice in America, and cultural differences were all seen as benefits:

I think [the experience] is equally important for men and women. Network that I develop here will be useful in the future (Interview 2, single, age 30).

I knew this experience would be good for my career (Interview 4, single, age 27).

My work in Japan was to look at overseas markets; so gaining practical knowledge here will be an advantage (Interview 7, single, age 29).

I learned a lot from the opportunity, so I think I can be useful after I return (Interview 8, single, age 43).

If I work at the same department after I return, I will be able to communicate smoothly because I know how things work here and effective ways of communication (Interview 14, single, age 32).

There are differences in way of thinking and in business process even between American large companies and venture capitals. The experience to do business beyond these cultural differences will be useful in the future (Interview 17, single, age 37).

It depends on the department I will work at after I return. Now I'm taking care of sales in America. If I continue to work on the area [international sales], this experience will be very useful because I know a lot about K-music USA and its people, ... but there should be other advantages beyond that (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

For those who had engaged in business with United States or other overseas firms would continue to work at related departments after returning to Japan, the merits of expatriatism were clear for the most part. There seemed no clear perceived difference in what men and women believed they would gain from the experience. Overseas experience would have practical benefits at work if not direct pathways to promotions. As seen before, respondents were not very career-minded, so they may not consider expatriatism as such an opportunity.

However, the expatriatism did not always have clear positive impacts on their careers at some companies. It was often large companies with greater focus on Japanese market that saw the smallest impacts of expatriation; respondents did not find their experiences in America would be a particular advantage after repatriation. When expatriates cannot picture their careers clearly or have some doubts in career path after repatriation, leaving their companies was an option:

Q: Do you consider this experience will be beneficial for your career?

A: It depends. The company has very traditional structure. It would be the best to build one's career in Japan straight-ahead. If one wants to be a generalist and experience marketing or other fields, maybe this experience will be useful. The company doesn't have a system to utilize former expatriates well in Japan. It's a complicated issue. I need to see if the experience of expatriatism will work better for my career development (Interview 20, single, age 30).

Q: How do you picture your career path after returning to Japan?

A: The Japanese parent company is extremely domestic market centered. The company is trying to increase its share overseas, but it still is very domestic. I would like to have global perspectives within the company. I'm not sure how serious the company is about overseas business.

Q: Will your husband return with you?

A: If he wants to continue to work in America, I might consider becoming a local staff or get another job here. I have to make decisions after three years.

Q: How do you think your company will react?

I think they don't want me to quit considering all the investment in me as an expatriate. If I cannot picture my career after returning to Japan utilizing expatriate experiences, I think changing jobs is an option. I know quitting isn't acceptable to some people, but it's not clear how I will work after returning to Japan. I need to think straight (Interview 16, married without children, age 33).

The first respondent considered that the US subsidiary company was not famous within its parent company in Japan, and expatriates could be forgotten when they stay overseas for too many years. She did not intend to quit, but did acknowledge difficulties for women to work many years in a sales department. The second respondent was married and came with her husband, so her possible resignation was potentially due to both uncertain opportunities after repatriation and her husband's work. Her company was a large Japanese company with high domestic focus, and she said evaluation systems disadvantaged employees with flexible work hours, which working mothers mostly used. Although they were only two samples, large Japanese companies at the beginning stage of globalization or with little focus on overseas markets, the companies seemed to have difficulties in creating gender equal working conditions in Japan and providing career opportunities for repatriates. If these companies increase their overseas business in the future, these women would be assets as role models; however, chances that they would remain in the company for many years seemed small because of unclear career path and gender inequality.

Even if expatriatism did not have a clear company-specific positive outcome, the skills respondents learned through their expatriate experience would work positively for

their career overall. The respondents earned skills to make them more marketable. A respondent who was married who followed her husband said:

Q: Do you consider this experience will be beneficial for your career?

A: I won't have any trouble finding jobs in Japan because it's rare to find people who are fluent in English. It is useful if one can do both accountancy and English (Interview 5, married with a child, age 33).

The respondent did not intend to quit her job, but acknowledged the benefit of being an expatriate to improve her personal skillsets. She did not relate her thoughts with American career individualism or unfriendly Japanese corporate culture to women. Marketable skills made her confident to continue to find jobs in Japan despite how repatriation would be.

Considering expatriatism as a way to improve their skillsets would be the primary benefit for expatriate women. Perceived benefits varied from practical work experiences, network, language skills, to cultural understanding. Expatriatism was not generally recognized as a way to help advance their careers upwards among expatriate women; this could be related to their low career ambitions due to difficulties in life work balance and the lack of role models. The skills they get from the experiences could be useful after repatriation within or outside their companies.

Role Models

Respondents were pioneers in international business assignments for women. Most respondents did not have any other expatriate women in their locations, and worked among expatriate men and/or national employees. They were the minority in the expatriate communities, and most of them did not have role models. Five (25%) of them were the first women to work at the assigned locations or have different missions than previous expatriates. Five women said they knew former expatriate women in the

company and asked their advice before moving to the United States. Only one said she had another expatriate woman that she asked advice to when she encountered problems during her assignment. Expatriate women were few in number; networking within and/or across companies was difficult. Moreover, their backgrounds were diverse; such as marital status, age, language skills, and work environments would make their experiences greatly different and difficult to connect and give advice to. Another key issue would be that expatriate women were not in leadership roles; mentoring or becoming role models for other expatriate women were not their top priority. Due to lack of women's networks and role models, most respondents found themselves among male expatriates:

There aren't many expat women here. I've never heard of Japanese female engineers especially, so it's difficult to have a role model. I don't have woman as a role model, but I have an expat man I met here who I look up to (Interview 1). I don't have anyone because women who have experienced oversea assignments are small in number. I don't have any women; but I luckily have a man that who I respect the way he runs business and communicates with people. So, I learn from him and try to follow his styles (Interview 2, single, age 30).

There are 30 expatriates, and I'm the only woman. I don't think any women have been assigned to this location so far. That's just about this location; I think there are more women across North America (Interview 10, single, age 34).

Expatriates from Japan are from 23 to 25 people. All of them are men except me (Interview 14, single, age 32).

I cannot think of anyone who I can call as my mentor or role model in overseas assignment. ... When I need some advice, I talk to people with similar situations here. I didn't know anyone who had experienced overseas assignments when I was in Japan (Interview 17, single, age 37).

Expatriatism was officially gender neutral or gender absent corporate system, so expatriate women generally considered that working as expatriates was equal for men and women. However, they were disadvantaged in networking and having role models. They did not acknowledge that they were disadvantaged in these areas, and they reproduce

gendered expectations on expatriatism by accepting structures that were based on men's needs. This was why most expatriate women considered women would be able to take overseas assignment when they were single or married without children. Expatriate women were unaware that they were disadvantaged without role models, and they did not take an active role in changing the situation. For more women to participate in international assignments, expatriate women should network among themselves to share information and become role models for the next generation. Unless expatriate women increase their voice in the expatriate communities, expatriate structures will continue to reproduce its gendered norms.

Networking

The networking pattern for expatriate women was different from that of men's. As mentioned in the previous section, expatriate women did not have an established network among themselves. They were the minority among male dominated expatriate communities, and their gender played a role in professional and personal networking. Expatriate men and women had access to company expatriate network; however, the work network was stronger for men, and the line between work-related and private networks was ambiguous for men; they interacted with people from work in their private time. On the other hand, respondents often had their private network distinct from work-related one. This contributed to the recreation of the masculine structure, which led women to be excluded in unofficial ways.

Increased business networks were an asset that expatriates gained through overseas assignments. Although women were the minority, they were members of the expatriate communities. Expatriates from the same Japanese parent company became

“us” as opposed to American employees, “them.” Expatriates built intra-company expatriate network beyond personal backgrounds:

As the number of expats is small, I was also invited to various events. There wasn't a hierarchy there. I had conversation with people of different ranks very frankly. It's easier to approach people at higher ranks. I don't feel a difference in men and women. I was invited to play golf, too (Interview 1, single, age 26).

In Japan, it is rare to interact with people from other departments, but the expat community is so close here. Being known more widely in my company is a good thing. Communication isn't just among young expats, people with senior positions interact with me. It's a huge merit of being an expat (Interview 4, single, age 27).

Shared Japanese nationality connected expatriates closely beyond gender difference. The access to intra-corporate networks was an advantage for expatriates. Expatriate women were categorized as members of expatriate communities; yet there were gendered differences for women in building networks. Their rarity and visibility could be an advantage in networking:

People remembered my name quickly. People at senior positions remembered me, too. I tried to use it [my gender] as an advantage. I think a woman in the expat community is noticeable. It worked for the best for me (Interview 4, single, age 27).

Other respondents also mentioned that they were highly visible in expatriate communities. It depended on each respondent how she used the visibility; some considered it as an advantage and others were not very comfortable about high visibility. Sometimes respondents felt intimidated or uncomfortable:

Almost all Japanese expatriates and trainees here are male, so I wonder if they actually enjoy conversations freely when I'm around. I think there must be places they want to go with men only. ... The number of women is small, so I tend to reserve myself. ... I am perfectly fine with vulgar conversations. I shouldn't make them feel uncomfortable (Interview 1, single, age 26).

For better or worse, I receive adulation because I'm a woman in the male dominated world. Sometimes it works positively like for communication and networking. But I also have unpleasant experiences sometimes like being

considered as a party girl. It has both sides. I guess women stand out in a way. I don't think we are accepted as equals (Interview 3, married without children, age 30).

Respondents do gender in networking and communication. As members of expatriate communities, women gained greater intra-company network; and their gender hinders to communicate in the ways that expatriate men do.

The other characteristic of gendered doing in networking was that women often separated their private network from work network. Respondents interacted with expatriates to the extent to which they found greater networking opportunity, but most of them preferred to have their own private network that was different from work:

Expat women do not confine out networks to expat community only, so we can interact with people freely. However, expat men tend to be known better among expat men of higher positions. I don't have many opportunities to talk with higher rank expat men, but men did. Expat men have stronger network within the expat community (Interview 3, married without children, age 30).

Men are tied more to work on weekends. They are busy with associating with other expatriates. I feel network is tighter for expatriate men. I don't try too hard to get involved. I join when it sounds fun, and I don't when I don't feel like to (Interview 2, single, age 30).

Men spend more time [with fellow expatriate men]. They don't consider it as part of their work; they spend their private time with colleagues. ... As there are no other expatriate women, I don't spend private time with expatriates. Expatriate men spend time together, so I think there is a difference [between men and women] ... I wanted to have a network other than people from work (Interview 14, single, age 32).

It is true some girls start golf to survive in men's world, but I don't do things that I don't want to do. I don't want to mingle with men in such a way. I was like that since I was in Japan. I hear men get closer through that [playing golf], but some men don't. Anyways, I don't want to force myself to act like that (Interview 19, single, age 36).

It's inevitable to have strong relationships with Japanese expatriates from the same company. They helped me a lot at first, so I want to keep good relationships with them. My colleagues are also important. Lately, I decided to find new network and started to learn Spanish. So many people are fluent in Spanish. Many

of my colleagues are bilingual in English and Spanish. I also wanted to meet people who were from outside of the finance industry (Interview 7, single, age 29).

I joined choir as a club activity. I joined chorus for a while at first. Then I learned about choir clubs through a local Japanese society. ... Women are more active than men at their assigned locations. Some men just stay at home on weekends and watch Japanese dramas on YouTube. Women tend to travel and party; we are more active and sociable. I always went out on weekends. ... I didn't intend to play golf at all. I had so many other things I wanted to do instead of golf. Other expats asked me to play, so I don't think there was a gender difference. They'd welcome me if I wanted. ... Maybe if I were a man, others would have asked me more; I imagine they would tell me, "Golf is beneficial for work. It is a disadvantage if you don't play" (Interview 6, married without children, age 29).

Expatriate women's personal network was different from men's in a way that they did not spend their personal time with expatriates. There was not much expectation or pressure on them to interact in the ways men did. Some women played golf, but they articulated that they did so primarily for fun and not from work pressure. If there were more expatriate women, there could be other networking opportunities. As they did not have close private networks with expatriate men, they spent their private time outside work. Many of them had their own hobbies: tennis, sports, dance, music, taiko [Japanese drums], language learning, and so on. Expatriate women were often more active and sociable in finding local network than expatriate men. This gendered doing in networking unconsciously contribute to reproduce isolation of women from men's unofficial socialization patterns and produce alternative ways for expatriates to become more localized at assigned locations. Higher levels of localization of expatriate women would have a positive outcome for expatriate structure to be more inclusive and understanding of American culture and people.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides 1) a brief summary and discussions of major findings in expatriate women's gender practice in both private and organizational spheres 2) implication of the research, and 3) possibilities for future research.

Previous chapters show expatriate women's practices and thoughts on private and organizational domains. Respondents' personal background affects their expatriation experiences greatly. Moreover, organizations are gender neutral or gender absent officially, but gender inevitably plays a role at organizations. Both personal and organizational matters are inseparable from each other because expatriatism practice by Japanese corporations affects various aspects of expatriates' life and work.

Overseas assignments had very a significant affects on the lives of the women that took them. From childhood, study abroad, or work related overseas experiences, respondents have fostered motivation to work overseas. Their language skills and cultural experiences were an advantage in general adaptation, but not necessarily on work adaptation. Work adaptation was smoother when business practices at assigned locations were similar to that of Japan or when they were familiar with to previous work.

Age was a predominant factor that made women hesitate about international assignments; and it is particularly because of their gender. Women felt that their age was an important factor to consider given to them. That is the most prominent when they take the assignment and less so when they are in the United States. Single respondents commonly mention the loss of several years for their personal life during the assignments. Being young and single are factors to ensure flexibility and to work like

men do. They considered that international assignments was much more difficult for women once they are married and have children; this clearly was a reproduction of gendered expectation on expatriates that makes married women's assignments culturally more difficult. Those who take international assignments with a child or who take her husband with her were the ones who challenged the system.

Marital status and relationships had clear effects in their gendered practices at organizations. Five married respondents added new perspectives to the expatriate structure and several of them contributed to transforming some of the systems. A respondent with her child was asking her company to incorporate working mother's needs, such as allowances for day-care, in the expatriate benefit system. Expatriate men usually have stay-at-home mothers to take care of their children, so the benefit system premised mothers as primary caretakers and not professionals. Another respondent who came with her husband faced strong isolation from the system she did not fit. Single respondents and married respondents without children and trailing husbands in America did not overturn the gendered expectations, but a married respondent as primary assignee with her husband and a married respondent as secondary assignee with a child posed questions on existing gendered organizational systems. Single women often reproduced the masculine gendered structure; women did not initiate marriage and relocation, for instance. Single women faced difficulties in finding a partner partly because they prioritized work over actively look for someone. They had a strong sense of responsibility to accomplish their assignments. There were gendered prejudices on single women such as they would not return after finding a partner in America. Suspecting so

only for single women is unfair because they had strong sense of responsibilities for their assignments.

Career ambition was generally low among expatriate women. This was tied to the difficulty that women have in continuing their careers when they return to Japan.

Working in America made respondents have alternative ideas on women in careers and management, but it did not translate into their own career ambitions because they ultimately return to the Japanese work environments. Most literature supports that international management is required to reach senior management (Harris, 1993).

However, respondents' personal ambitions on their careers were not as high as they should be. Expatriatism was considered a learning opportunity for women to bring practical benefits in their work, but not a factor for career advancement. They considered skills they got from working in the United States useful in their future in or outside their companies. Their long-term commitment to their companies might be less than men due to organizational challenges for women to continue to work after having families. If Japanese companies succeed in promoting women in the workplace and women in the management, Japanese women would be able to see more role models as working mothers and other options for women in the workplace. Such structural transformations in the home ground were necessary to have a dynamic shift in expatriate structures. Most respondents did not have role models of expatriate women. It is a social problem that women did not have role models and thus could not aim higher in their careers. The structure was the same for expatriate women, and the pioneers needed to be role models for the next generations. Expatriate women should have their own network to have a bigger voice in the expatriate structure. They were mostly engaged in reproducing the

male organization cultures, and the small number of women who challenged the structure face isolation. This needs to change to ensure gender equality in expatriatism in official and unofficial domains.

Networking patterns were distinct between men and women. The expatriate networks were important for both men and women. Expatriate women also gained access to the masculine structure, and their visibility gave them an advantage to communicate with expatriate of higher positions. However, they could not join the network as men do; men often spent their private time with work mates, but women often found their own private network separate from work. Expatriate women were mostly unaware of the disadvantages in being segregated from the unofficial networks and considered their organizations equal because they were included in the expatriate communities.

The unconscious masculine culture in organizations was produced through practices of male networks and relations including private domains; and the masculine structure was both medium and outcome of the reproduction of gendered practice (King, 2000). The masculine culture was deeply embedded in organizations and unconsciously isolate women through routine practices among men.

[T]his (patriarchal) system was reproduced by instantiation of certain virtual rules (and resources) in practice so that male managers, informed by structure, repeat their exclusionary routines and thus contribute to the recreation of this masculinist system. ... [T]his virtual rules of masculinity are instantiated in certain practices such as sexual jokes, beer drinking, playing golf, and watching sport. By engaging in these routine practices, which both draw on and reproduce structure, these individuals simultaneously unknowingly reproduce the patriarchal institution to which their particular structure is appropriate. ... One of the central, though often unacknowledged understandings of these men is that work provides them with a specific kind of masculine status that is central to their political and cultural standing in both the public and private domains (King, 2000, p. 378).

This unofficial gendered organizational structure was the root cause why women in the workplace in general not fitting into the social structure. Respondents did not seem passionate about engaging in the masculine networks in their private times. When getting into the masculine network was not what Japanese expatriate women aim for, they could continue to be excluded from the gendered corporate systems. However, one hope that I see from their networking pattern is that women are more localized than men. They did not confine their network to expatriates and were more outgoing and more willing to socialize outside their work network. This was an advantage when the localization of Japanese companies in America necessitates expatriates who have vitality to operate/direct among national staff without or with few fellow expatriates. Expatriate women could fit into this new phase of expatriatism well.

The findings in this research are useful for Japanese multinational corporations to understand gender plays an important role in expatriation. They need to acknowledge that corporate systems on expatriatism have failed to incorporate women's needs such as child-care support. Organizational dynamics need to change from stereotype that expatriation is for men or women who can work like men. Otherwise, Japanese expatriation will continue to lack in gender equality and diversity. Future role models for expatriate women and potential female managers reserve themselves because of normative expectations at organizations. Acknowledging women are disadvantaged in expatriation is a first step to change the status quo. Networking among and mentoring to expatriate women is a desirable next step to free them from male expatriation model and to constitute a new model.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to convenience and snowball sampling methods, respondents were skewed to young and low or non-management positions. The age and organizational position distributions of the expatriate women population are unknown, but it is anticipated that challenges for women at senior managements were different from respondents in the research. Research on gendered challenges for Japanese expatriate women in senior management positions need to be done in the future.

This research was focused on women's side of the expatriate experiences, and men's side of the story regarding how they view fellow expatriate women and the ways they interact with them needs attention. As the number of women gradually increases, men's gendered perspectives could reach to another phase in the future. Or validating that they keep reproducing masculine gendered norms and practices will also be an important finding. The chances that women with abilities will remain in such companies are not high because they have skills to make their living without such companies.

Trailing spouses of Japanese expatriate women also deserve particular attention. When men accompany women at international assignments, men face gendered challenges. As a step to understand partners of expatriate women, those who decide to remain in Japan while their partners work overseas will provide interesting insight. As women's choices in careers become more diverse, their partners' life choices ultimately become diverse.

These are a few of the topics for the future research. Women at top management and men around expatriate women at work and in relationships will allow us to better understand the whole picture of expatriates' world. From the current research, expatriate

women mostly reproduce masculine structure, and transform some of the rules when they are challenged by the structure. Although women's participation in international assignments is rare, the structure must incorporate women's needs to a greater extent to ensure gender equality. For that, women need to be at higher positions and men's rigid gender norms should be altered to some extent.

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